

TWR Background Knowledge Tools ELA Guidebooks 3-5 (2022) Units

Frequently Asked Questions

- **What are the TWR Background Knowledge tools? Why are they embedded in the updated ELA Guidebooks 3-5?**

TWR created introductory tools for each TWR writing strategy used in the updated Guidebooks. The TWR introductory tools, also called TWR background knowledge tools, are designed using topics that are familiar, everyday content. The purpose of these TWR tools is to provide students with an opportunity to gain familiarity with the TWR strategy before using it in content. This will help to ensure that students develop a conceptual understanding of the writing strategy first to support understanding when embedded in content.

- **Why are the out of content topics repeated throughout the TWR background knowledge tools?**

The topics selected are ones that most third through fifth grade students are familiar with so students can focus on building conceptual understanding of the strategy and the thought process for how to complete it. For these activities, the content is not the primary focus.

- **Do I need to complete them every time?**

The TWR background knowledge tools are included as a “core” activity the first time a TWR writing strategy is used. After first exposure, the tools may appear again as an “optional” activity. If students demonstrate a conceptual understanding of the TWR writing strategy, then the “optional” activity can be skipped.

- **Can I skip the TWR background knowledge tools?**

TWR strongly encourages teachers to complete the tools with students to ensure a basic understanding of the TWR strategy before it is used with Guidebooks content. In some schools or parishes that have been using TWR in previous years, students may already be familiar with certain strategies. In these instances, school and grade-level leaders should make the determination about requiring teachers to complete every “core” background knowledge tool for every TWR strategy versus just the ones that students have not yet practiced.

- **Can I move it to a different point in the lesson?**

The TWR background knowledge activities can be shifted to an earlier point in a lesson. However, two considerations should be made:

First, be careful not to front-load too much information for students. Beginning a lesson with a TWR background knowledge activity that won't be used until later in the lesson may be too disconnected for some students to be able to remember and apply that strategy in content at a later point in the lesson.

Second, since the activities in the Guidebooks lessons are designed to build upon each other, the impact of moving activities should be carefully considered during the planning

process while teachers are annotating lessons; teachers and school and grade-level leaders should make the final determination.

- **How do I account for the amount of instructional time necessary to complete the TWR background knowledge activities in the Guidebooks?**
Spending instructional time in the initial practice of the TWR strategy will facilitate later use of the strategy. Since the strategies reappear throughout the units and the grades, as students build proficiency they will be able to focus more of their efforts on the substance of the content.
- **I completed the provided TWR background knowledge activity. What if my students need more practice with out of Guidebook content examples of a TWR strategy?**
While TWR strategies are meant to predominantly be practiced in content, teachers may find they need to step out of content to reinforce students' conceptual understanding of the TWR strategy. Teachers can use the provided background knowledge activity as a model to create another example using a familiar, out of content topic.
- **Do the TWR background knowledge tools change for grades 3 through 5?**
The TWR background knowledge tools are the same for grades 3 through 5.

Please contact guidebooks@thewritingrevolution.org with questions.